

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

To place the application in better form, Applicants have amended the specification to correct various minor informalities and to place the application in better form. No new matter has been added by these changes.

Claims 1, 2 and 4-14 are presented for consideration. Claim 1 is the sole independent claim. Claim 3 has been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Claims 1, 13 and 14 have been amended. Support for these claims can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 1, 4 and 6-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,654,098 to Asano et al. Claims 1 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Asano et al. patent. Applicants submit that the cited art does not teach or suggest many features of the present invention, as previously recited in claim 1. Therefore, these rejections are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicants submit that claims 1, 2 and 4-14, as presented, amplify the distinctions between the present invention and the cited art.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claim 3 recites patentable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As the

Examiner will appreciate, claim 3 had depended from claim 1 and claim 1 has now been amended to at least the incorporate the same features as dependent claim 3. As such, claim 1 is understood to correspond to claim 3 having been rewritten into independent form. Accordingly, claim 1 is now in condition for allowance.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 1, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

Dependent claims 2 and 4-14 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 1. Individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010 All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney for Applicants
Lawrence A. Stahl
Registration No. 30,110

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3800
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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